Ex. "A"

State of Mississippi

WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PERMIT

Permit to Discharge Wastewater in Accordance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

THIS CERTIFIES

Meridian POTW
2304 Highway 11 South
Meridian, MS
Lauderdale County

has been granted permission to conduct environmental activities as outlined herein. This permit is issued in accordance with the provisions of the Mississippi Code Annotated, and the regulations and guidelines adopted and promulgated thereunder.

Mississippi Environmental Quality Permit Board

Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

Issued/Modified: FEB 22 2005

Expires: JAN 31 2010

Permit No. MS0020117

Agency Interest # 13261

Permit to Discharge Wastewater in Accordance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

Meridian POTW
Subject Item Inventory
Permit Number:MS0020117
Activity ID No.: PER20040001

Subject Item Inventory:

ID	Designation	Description
AI13261	MS0020117-001	Municipality
RPNT1	MS0020117-001	Outfall 001 (Municipal Wastewater)

Receiving Stream Relationships:

Subject Item	Relationship	Receiving Stream
RPNT1 Outfall 001 (Municipal Wastewater)	Discharges Into	Sowashee Creek

KEY

ACT = Activity
AREA = Area
CONT = Control Device
IA = Insignificant Activity
RPNT = Release Point
AI = Agency Interest
CAFO = Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation
EQPT = Equipment
MAFO = Animal Feeding Operation
TRMT = Treatment

GENERAL INFORMATION

Meridian POTW
2304 Highway 11 South
Meridian, MS
Lauderdale County

Alternate/Historic Identifiers

ID	Alternate/Historic Name
13261	City of Meridian
MS0020117	Meridian POTW
MS0020117	Meridian POTW
MS0020117	Meridian POTW

User Group	Start Date	End Date
Official Site Name	3/14/1995	
Water-NPDES	3/15/2000	2/22/2005
Water-NPDES	3/14/1995	3/13/2000
Water-NPDES	2/22/2005	1/31/2010

Basin: Tombigbee River Basin

Section: 1 **Township** 6N **Range:** 16E

Latitude: 32° 20' 18" 72 tenths **Longitude:** 88° 44' 18" 84 tenths

Location Description: Copy of 001

Relevant Documents: Cover Letter, Lab Data, Form 2A

Emissions Inventory ID: 282644

SUNHERALD.com

THESUNHERALD

A RIVER THREATENED
Bailey Thompson

The mid-July heat already is steaming away the morning dew as Matt Hicks and I enter the Black Creek Wilderness area of the DeSoto National Forest just south of the U.S. Army's Camp Shelby. Hicks wants to show me what healthy streams look and feel like before we go to the bad parts of our four-day journey through the upper Pascagoula River basin.

Still athletic at 33 and sporting a short beard, he is an old-fashioned naturalist who can identify just at any tree, bush or insect in Mississippi. After growing up in McComb, he earned a master's in biology from the University of Alabama and worked for the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, sampling streams for pollution and, in the process, learning how politics and regulation intersect. Last year, he went to work for the Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit national group that has helped preserve 50,000 acres in the basin from logging and development.

Before emptying into the Gulf of Mexico, the Pascagoula River and its tributaries drain 9,600 square miles, beginning to the north just above Meridian. The basin stretches westward to Jefferson Davis County and eastward to Mobile and Washington counties in Alabama.

The basin's tributaries resemble branches of a great tree. BThe mid-July heat already is steaming away the morning dew as Matt Hicks and I enter the Black Creek Wilderness area of the DeSoto National Forest just south of the U.S. Army's Camp Shelby. Hicks wants to show me what healthy streams look and feel like before we go to the bad parts of our four-day journey through the upper Pascagoula River basin.

Still athletic at 33 and sporting a short beard, he is an old-fashioned naturalist who can identify just at any tree, bush or insect in Mississippi. After growing up in McComb, he earned a master's in biology from the University of Alabama and worked for the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, sampling streams for pollution and, in the process, learning how politics and regulation intersect. Last year, he went to work for the Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit national group that has helped preserve 50,000 acres in the basin from logging and development.

ecause it drains one of the nation's most rural areas, where row-crop agriculture gave way years ago to pine plantations, the river system's biological diversity remains robust.

Yet rapid population growth along the Coast is moving northward, bringing trouble with it. Pollutants running off parking lots or seeping into the ground water from septic tanks often end up in the river. Meanwhile, some streams in the upper basin, from about Hattiesburg north, already show heavy stress, as indicated from MDEQ's sampling records.

Before joining Hicks for the trip, I talked with Phil Bass, the state's top pollution officer at MDEQ in Jackson. He explained that the federal Clean Water Act, which Congress passed in 1972, has shut off most of the pipes dumping pollution directly into streams. The biggest problems now come from "non-point" sources such as improperly treated sewage or storm water laden with oil, grease or fertilizer.

Ex "A-1"

million gallons of wastewater a day. Bennie J. Sellers, director of public services, remains sold on his city's method as the most effective and economical way to dispose of sewage. "I don't think we are affecting the quality of the water downstream at all," he said, adding that his department regularly tests the discharge into the river to assure it meets current federal standards.

Bass of MDEQ doesn't dispute Hattiesburg's compliance. But that performance may not be good enough in the future as standards rise, he said. Many communities in Mississippi built lagoons in the 1960s, and improvements such as aeration have stretched the technology's lifespan. Still, investment has to continue to stay abreast of expectations for clean water. Bass pointed to nearby Laurel as a case where a city had to make a costly upgrade to a state-of-the-art mechanical process for treating wastes.

Storm water can be rough as well on streams, a fact the Clean Water Act recognizes. This year, phase II of federal regulations require MDEQ or local governments to monitor runoff from developments as small as one acre. Yet the state agency received no additional funds to do the job. meaning its enforcement staff of six people will have a lot more to work.

Conduits for pollution

Indeed, some branches and creeks in urban areas become virtual conduits for storm water and industrial wastes. One of these battered streams, Gordon Creek, flows only about 60 feet from the popular sandwich place where Hicks and I stop for lunch in Hattiesburg. Concrete and stone have made a ditch of its channel, into which flow fertilizers from yards and automotive gunk from parking lots.

We follow the stream's course through neighborhoods, both modest and upscale. We see few if any signs of buffers to protect the Gordon. "It looks like a bowling alley, and that's not natural," Hicks says in one area where the creek has been forced to flow along a new expressway. Normally, 70 or more species might live in such a stream. Hicks doubts whether more than 10 can survive there now.

We see an even harsher example the next day in Meridian. The Sowashee Creek flows through the city close to Interstate 59. Actually, the water now rushes along the designated channel, carrying pollutants with it. "This stream is being hit by just about every stress you can throw at it," Hicks says as we explore along the shore.

Worse, the Sowashee's problems flow down the basin, eventually reaching the Pascagoula and the Mississippi Sound. "Just imagine how many smaller streams are carrying pollutants," he says. It's all additive, which means you have to fix the branches and creeks before you can preserve the river.

A good example is where the Sowashee's storm water and wastes hit the Okatibbee Creek, which joins the Chunky River near Enterprise to form the Chickasawhay.

At Old Arch Street, about 10 miles above the confluence with the Sowashee, the Okatibbee appears to be healthy with diverse wildlife. In fact, it registers a respectable score of 75 of 100 on MDEQ's biological health scale. Below where the Sowashee enters, however, the score for the Okatibbee plummets to 45, which is well below the minimum score to be considered healthy.

Yet nature tends to heal itself if damaged places are restored and left alone. The problem, of

course, is money. It would cost a fortune to fix the Sowashee or the Gordon, Hicks says. Who's going to make that decision? Wouldn't it be better, he asks, to put more energy and thought into planning for growth - or at least to protect areas in the basin that haven't been degraded?

To make the point, he shows me a stretch of Bouie Creek, where it crosses U.S. 49 west of Hattiesburg just before it joins with Okatoma Creek to form the Bouie River. Launching the boat at an isolated landing, we encounter a clean, pleasant stream far above the mining's devastation. White oaks, tupelo and magnolia mix with other hardwoods lining both sides of stable banks.

We travel several miles upstream through flat, stilllooking water. Only occasional houses peek through the foliage, and in a bend above some shoals we pass a swimming hole with a swing hanging from a high branch. Several miles farther up, we beach at a sandbar and Hicks, wearing his customary T-shirt and shorts, plunges into the water for samples.

He finds graceful damselflies, with elongated bodies, emerging from the larval stages. Adults lay their eggs in the water, which sink to the bottom. The larvae can be ferocious predators of other insects until they mature and float to the surface, ready to mate and renew the cycle of life.

Hicks declares the river at this point to be "very healthy" because of the diversity of aquatic insects he finds.

I am already convinced of the fact from the soft gurgling of the water and the sunlight bouncing across its surface in the cool of the late afternoon. I am reluctant to climb back into the boat and leave.